

Corona Update
for the
2021-2022 School Year

January 18, 2022

Dear AIS-Salzburg Community Members;

Here is the latest information on the Corona situation here in Austria and within the school where we are experiencing a number of positive infections due to the present Omicron wave.

1. Present situation in Austria and Salzburg

1. 7-Day incidence rate nationwide (incidents of infections over seven days per 100,000 pop.)

Monday, January 17, 2022:	1,288.0
Sunday, January 16, 2022:	1,253.6
Saturday, January 15, 2022:	1,193.6
Friday, January 14, 2022:	1,144.0
Thursday, January 13, 2022:	1,029.7

2. 7-Day incidence rate in Salzburg Province

Monday, January 17, 2022:	2,187.6
Sunday, January 16, 2022:	2,162.8
Saturday, January 15, 2022:	2,115.7
Friday, January 14, 2022:	2,064.3
Thursday, January 13, 2022:	1,903.1

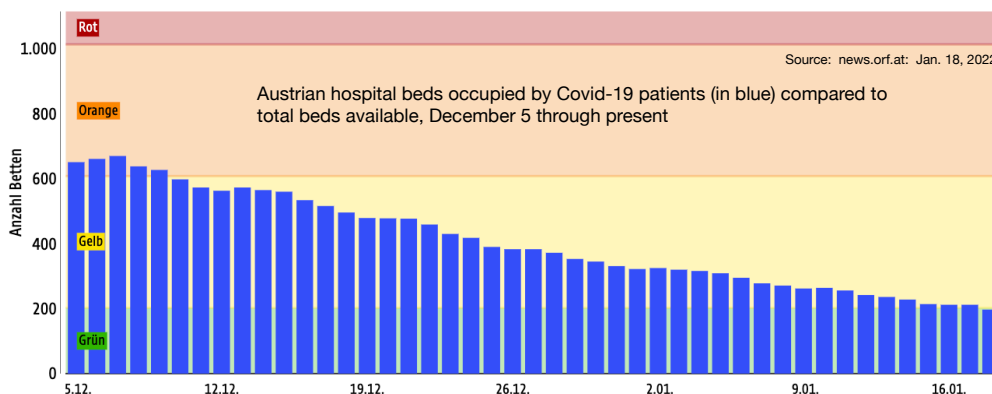
3. Hospitalizations nationwide

ICU Patients hospitalized with Covid-19	194 (9% of available beds)
ICU Patients hospitalized without Covid-19	983 (46% of available beds)

4. Hospitalizations in Salzburg Province

ICU Patients hospitalized with Covid-19	13 (10% of available beds)
ICU Patients hospitalized without Covid-19	84 (62% of available beds)

Salzburg Province continues to have the highest 7-day incidence rate in all of Austria. The highest rate in Salzburg Province is presently in Pongau where the present 7-day incidence rate is 3,650.2. Despite these very high numbers, the situation in the nation's hospitals remains stable and the number of Covid-19 patients continues to decline slightly.



II. Positive Infections at AIS-Salzburg

Despite our best efforts to establish as safe and risk-free an environment as we can, including restricted time off campus, testing non-residents daily, and a vaccination rate significantly higher than the general public, we have been unable to keep Omicron from touching our lives here at AIS-Salzburg and causing a handful of positive infections. Here is a breakdown:

January 4: one resident-care staff member infected and quarantined (off-campus/online) during break
January 12: one female resident student positive with PCR test and quarantined (off-campus/online)
one female resident student quarantined on campus through contact (online)
January 15: one faculty member infected and quarantined at home (online)
January 17: two non-resident (day) students tested positive (antigen) and returned home (online)
January 18: one faculty member infected and quarantined at home (online)
one boarding student positive with antigen test and quarantined (off-campus/online)
one boarding student quarantined on campus through contact (online)

There is a clear trend here that demonstrates that the Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 is easily transmitted and despite masking, testing and the general isolation evident in a boarding school such as ours, can still find its way to a host.

All of the above-mentioned community members with positive or assumed-positive infections (awaiting PCR test confirmation) have all had very mild symptoms which passed within a handful of days. As reported by many, these have included headaches, stuffy/runny noses and an occasional sore throat primarily. Some also complain of a mild cough. We know that this need not be the case necessarily, but are pleased that we can report no serious symptoms to date.

In continuing to test all non-residents first thing in the morning as well as maintaining masking requirements for all throughout the academic day until all non-residents have departed, we have kept the virus at an arms length for some time. However, it now appears that it will find its way through our defenses and infect others in the coming weeks. There is a point where the choice would be either to close our doors or accept that infections with mostly mild consequences will need to be accepted as a part of an equation that must be balanced prudently; but avoid completely eliminating the benefits of secondary education for our students.

III. The (Possibly) Good News

Although it may be somewhat premature, there are indications and reports from health experts that the Omicron wave may be of shorter duration than was once feared. In South Africa, where the mutation was first recorded, life is pretty much back to normal these days after a period of rising infections that lasted around three to four weeks. In the UK, although infected numbers remain high, there has been a clear drop in new infections this past week; leading health experts to surmise that a three-to-four-week wave, followed by a rapid decline is to be expected elsewhere as well.

We certainly hope this is the case as it gives us some perspective for planning and moving forward this winter and spring in the hopes of being able to offer a full—if delayed—program as scheduled originally including the excursions, multiple ski trips and community service opportunities.

IV. Decisions, Decisions

In the meantime, we will continue to keep things battened down here at the school, continue testing all non-residents daily, continue with the government's testing program for schools for all residents, and adjusting our programming, free time intervals, and other measures as need may indicate. We do not, now, believe that we can be 100% effective in restricting the spread of this virus, but we can do what is necessary to help ensure that (a) infections are quickly identified and dealt with immediately, and (b) help ensure that the symptoms of infection remain mild and immediately addressed through our previous efforts to establish a very high internal vaccination rate.

We realize, of course, that this may or not be a comfortable situation for you as parents and that you have justified concerns for the health of your child, given the infectiousness of the Omicron variant. We understand your concerns and continue to take them seriously. For this and other reasons, we will maintain the offering of online/hybrid instruction in all classes (which is working quite well) and communicate as soon as possible with you whenever need arises, the situation changes or an issue is identified that you need to be informed of.

In the meantime, we encourage all parents and guardians to contact us if they need to and—if the possibility is there—to consider whether you would be more comfortable and feel more secure if your child continued online for the time being. This is perfectly acceptable to us and can be accommodated immediately.

Other, less-mitigating decisions can also be made which can improve security and safety. For example, we will be taking students on a ski trip to Lofer this coming weekend. The ski area has been selected because it is nearby and not in one of the regions of Salzburg Province that has an extremely high incidence rate. Further, nearly all of the lifts at Lofer are chair lifts rather than enclosed gondolas. The fresh air and exercise will do everyone good and will provide an experience that features the great beauty of the Alps in winter as well as an enjoyable period of time together with friends. However, you can decide that your child should not participate: staff will be on campus and alternative activities and internal events will also be offered.

We thank you again for your support and let us know your thoughts at any time.

Yours,



Paul McLean
Headmaster